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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1837
INFO RUEHXS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS COLL
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 1605
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3040
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5924
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 3617

UNCLAS JAKARTA 000458

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E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: Ambassador Hume Visits Rohingya Refugees in Aceh

1. (SBU) On March 7, Ambassador Hume visited the 193 Rohingya boat people on Wei island off Aceh's northern tip. The Rohingya refugees are housed on the Sabang Naval base, a large compound with good access control and adequate space. Although the camp is technically off limits to unauthorized personnel, the TNI commander in charge of the facility permitted the ambassador to enter and tour the site. Sabang Mayor Munawar Liza Zainal facilitated the visit.

2. (U) The Rohingya camp is clean and appears well managed. Cooking, sleeping, and sanitation facilities are adequate and there is ample room for recreation. When the Ambassador arrived most of the Rohingya were busy playing stickball, volleyball, or pingpong. They appeared to be healthy and in good spirits. No one at the camp knew that the Ambassador was coming, so no special arrangements were made for his visit.

3. (SBU) The base commander told the Ambassador that he had been ordered to provide accommodation and facilities for the Rohingya into the indefinite future. The burden, however, was less than he expected because of strong support from the local government and the fact that the Rohingyas themselves were undemanding and stayed out of trouble. When asked what additional assistance was required, the only item he could think of was a few 50 gallon drums for water storage.

4. (SBU) The head of the Sabang branch of Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) who has worked with the refugees since the day they arrived, agreed that the camp was well run and did not lack for supplies. According to her, this was in stark contrast to the first few weeks the camp was open. At that time, she said, everyone expected that the Rohingyas would be gone in a week or two, so there was little planning and everything was done on a day-to-day basis. Once it became clear that the Rohingya would not be moved in the near future, she said, coordination improved and various organizations worked together to reorganize the camp.

5. (SBU) Under the current arrangement, the Sabang local government provides all food and other necessities for the Rohingya from its own budget. The Ministry for Social Affairs and the Coordinating Ministry for People's Welfare have promised to reimburse the local government's expenses and send shipments of supplies but have yet to do so. Despite this, the Mayor said, his government would continue to feed and care for the Rohingya because, as a former refugee himself, he understood what they are going through. Hume